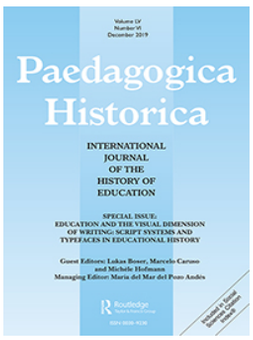

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"*Letra inglesa*": educators, teachers, and the quest for identity in the Hispanic world (1820–1860)

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ABSTRACT

Calligraphic culture in education had a long tradition in the Hispanic World. This entailed the cultivation of specific forms of script to the detriment of others. Since the late eighteenth century, discussions about the shape of letters and the differences between different alphabets were associated with national characters. The *letra inglesa* (English script) represented a wave of modernization of script and, at the same time, a challenge to the specific Spanish calligraphic tradition in the first half of the nineteenth century. The disputes over the suitability of this font for educational purposes are the focus of this contribution. It explores the spread of the *letra inglesa* and the resistance it encountered in the Hispanic world, particularly among educators. On the Spanish side of the Atlantic, the contribution focuses on the decade-long disputes in Madrid that had national resonance and became increasingly nationalistic. In some republics of South and Central America, republican order and modernization became strongly associated with English script; in others, the attachment to inherited scripts retained the upper hand. Issues of collective identity, professionalization and cultural awareness against British influence concurred in shaping extensive discussion about the chances and challenges of education and cultural transformation.

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Writing; collective identity; schoolteachers; political transformation; school policies

Associations between the form of letters, or script, and cultural developments have existed for a long time. Explicit links can be traced back to the fifteenth century, when the new typographies of printing propelled the renovation of different forms of script.[1] For better or worse, the visibility of letters gives them an iconic function. Letters convey not only the spoken word, but their materiality and form convey a second message related to legibility, conventions, history, and collective identifications. Letters do all this by causing associations that have become "nationalised" over the course of time.[2] Script serves as a cultural form of identity when circulating in governmental offices, courtrooms, and classrooms, for instance. In this sense, letters and their forms as well as their purposeful re-forms are signs of cultural options.[3]

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[1] Alfred Wendehorst, "Wer konnte im Mittelalter lesen und schreiben?" in *Schulen und Studium im sozialen Wandel des hohen und späten Mittelalters*, ed. Johannes Fried (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke, 1986), 31.

[2] Jürgen F. Schopp, "Typographische Schrift als Mittel nationaler Identifikation," in *Valami Más. Beiträge des Finnisch-Ungarischen Kultursemiotischen Symposions*, ed. Eckhard Höfner, Hartmut Schröder, and Roland Wittmann (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2002), 106.

[3] Helmut Glück, *Schrift und Schriftlichkeit. Eine sprach- und kulturwissenschaftliche Studie* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1987), 113–18; Peter Bain and Paul Shaw, eds., *Blackletter: Type and National Identity* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998). For an interesting case of this link in Nazi Germany, where old "Gothic" letters became the official standard, see

In the following, I will explore how an expanding form of script in school handwriting in the Hispanic world challenged collective identities, particularly in the first half of the nineteenth century. Of all types of script circulating and spreading, English script posed the major problem for those attached to tradition. This study is explorative insofar as almost no scholarship about the links between competing forms of script and schooling have been carried out. Only old, traditionalistic and overtly conservative Spanish scholars from the early twentieth century collected a considerable amount of documents in their works without taking a closer analytical look.[4] In addition, and to my knowledge, almost no specific scholarship on this subject has been published about South and Central America. Only a recent study about the early history of schooling in independent Uruguay has considered the subject from the point of view of professionalisation.[5] Further references to the problem are scant, scattered, and circumstantial.[6] Here, I will argue that disputes over English script for school writing mirrored broader discussions about changing collective identities in a time of crucial political transformation within the Spanish world. Whereas this type of script increasingly spread in commercial activities, its inclusion in schools was not only a practical matter. It rather became an indication of conflicting cultural and ideological orientations.

In a first step, I will sketch the culture of writing and the characterisation of script in Spain during the Late Enlightenment (1). Then I will follow the controversies that the growing use of English script in Spain caused in the field of teaching (2). In a further step, I will outline the main changes in the link between the form of script and collective identities in the young Hispanic American republics (3), showing commonalities and differences with the developments in the mother country. I will discuss these preferences as not being solely technical in character, but rather as becoming highly ideologised options towards collective identities being displayed in these types of script.

1. Writing and the culture of teaching in Spain

In the Spanish culture of elementary education, writing and its teaching was not just one skill among others. It was rather the outstanding form of professional knowledge, fostering identification between good writing and good education. Traditionally, urban elementary schoolmasters in Spain saw themselves above all as experts in writing. In the context of the expansion of the early modern state, a lot of paperwork had to be done. Paperwork long remained a profitable task for the lowest stratum of the early modern professional class – the notaries, a group that included many schoolmasters. These experts in legal formulas and

Susanne Wehde, *Typographische Kultur. Eine zeichentheoretische und kulturgeschichtliche Studie zur Typographie und ihrer Entwicklung* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2000), 273–326.

[4]Emilio Cotarelo y Mori, *Diccionario biográfico y bibliográfico de calígrafos españoles*, 2 vols, vol. 1 (Madrid: Visor, 2004); Rufino Blanco y Sánchez, *Diccionario de calígrafos españoles* (Madrid: Establecimiento tipográfico de Jaime Ratés, 1903).

[5]Juan Viacava, "Teaching, Learning, and Evaluating: Handwriting in Uruguayan Public Elementary Schools in the 1830s," *Paedagogica Historica* 53, no. 5 (2017); Juan Andrés Camou Viacava, *The Schoolchildren Will Come to Salute the Sun: The Making of Uruguay's Public Education System, 1830s* (PhD diss., Emory University, 2016), 156–72.

[6]Meri L. Clark, "Teaching Writing I n the Republic of Colombia, 1800–1850," *Paedagogica Historica* 46, no. 4 (2010): 449–61; María Teresa Bermúdez, "Las leyes, los libros de textos y la lectura, 1857–1876," in *Historia de la lectura en México* (Mexico: El Colegio de México, 1997), 127–52; Kenya Bello, "Del Gremio a la Compañía: Los maestros de primeras letras de la ciudad de México (1771–1845)," in *Procesos constitucionales mexicanos: La constitución de 1824 y la angitua constitución*, ed. Beatriz Rojas (Mexico: Editorial Mora, 2017), 352–75; José Bustamante Vismara, "Escrituras y lecturas a través de la educación elemental. Buenos Aires 1800/1860," *Anuario del Centro de Estudios Hlstóricos* 5 (2005), 367–83.

terminology had vocational training and usually managed their own workshops and apprentices. In search of suitable apprentices and additional income, these notaries engaged in teaching activities and tried to bridge the gap between their "decent" status and their scarce revenues.[7] The humblest group of these scribes often had to open their own schools. In many cities, the emergence of a group of elementary schoolmasters developed outside of the Catholic Church and in close connection with specific calligraphic and writing skills. The self-image and prestige of this group mostly depended upon their ability to write. Moreover, calligraphy and writing along with some arithmetic was better paid than other elementary subjects of learning such as reading or religion.[8]

As a question of honour and prestige, schoolmasters insisted on their writing expertise. These masters often acted as experts at court hearings and on behalf of the administration – with the task of uncovering falsified documents. The state had a vested interest in protecting and regulating this branch of activity. The quite early and idiosyncratic institutionalisation of the teaching profession in Spain was intimately related to the interests of the Spanish central state. In 1641, the crown created the position of "major writer of privileges" (*escritor mayor de privilegios*) in charge of inspecting writing when needed and in 1642 established the Brotherhood of Saint Cassian in Madrid.[9] In 1729 the crown organised a professional corps of experts in the capital and other cities to identify falsifications. The members of these corps had to be recruited from among the best urban schoolmasters.[10] Catholic rituals and ideals of piety certainly pervaded their brotherhoods; however, teachers' organisations were completely independent from the Catholic Church, though they were at the same time dependent upon the work of the state apparatus. The official sanctioning of teachers as aides in state affairs had at least two effects. It linked the regulation of writing and its teaching with the regular supply of writing experts for the courts. Furthermore, it confirmed the self-image of teachers as calligraphists.

These brotherhoods experienced an upgrading after the expulsion of the Jesuits from the Kingdom of Spain in 1767. After the Jesuits' expulsion from the Spanish possessions in 1767, the crown envisioned a new era of schooling shaped by these groups of secular urban teachers attached to the state.[11] For this purpose, a revamping of their mode of schooling and their organisation was needed. A *Colegio Académico* of the elementary teachers of the city of Madrid replaced the old brotherhood in 1780, a clear sign of secularisation of the organisational form.[12] These changes certainly increased the power position of the urban schoolteachers and reinforced their alliance with state policies.[13] The traditional, purportedly irrefutable proof of the advantages of their work, the

[7]Ruth Pike, *Aristocrats and Traders: Sevillian Society in the Sixteenth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), 93–6.
[8]Ana Martínez Pereira, *Manuales de escritura de los siglos de oro. Repertorio crítico y analítico de obras manuscritas e impresas* (Mérida: Editorial regional de Extremadura, 2006).
[9]See "Casanova (José de)" in Cotarelo y Mori, *Diccionario*, 1: 182–203.
[10]Ibid., 38.
[11]*Real Provisión de los señores del Consejo, en el extraordinario, a consulta con S. M. Para reintegrar á los Maestros y Preceptores seculares en la enseñanza de las primeras Letras, Gramática y Retórica, proveyendose estos Magisterios y Catedras á oposicion, y estableciendo viviendas y casas de pupilage, para los Maestros y Discipulos, en los Colegios donde sea conveniente, informando por menor al Consejo* (Madrid: En la Imprenta Real de la Gazeta, 1767).
[12]Jean-René Aymes, "Les "ilustrados" espagnols de la deuxième moitié du XVIIIe siècle et l'enseignement élémentaire. Etude comparative," in *Ecole et société en Espagne et en Amérique Latine (XVIIIe–XXe siècles)*, ed. Jean-René Aymes, Eve-Marie Fell, and Jean-Louis Guereña (Tours: Univesité de Tours, 1985), 9–48.
[13]Alberto del Pozo Pardo, "El despostismo ilustrado y la escuela primaria," in *Educación e Ilustración. Dos siglos de reformas en la enseñanza* (Madrid: Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia, 1988), 269–99.

handwritten *muestras* included in the books published by the most reputed calligraphists,[14] no longer sufficed. In the context of Bourbon Reforms, the state abolished all main features of the old culture of autonomous organisations,[15] particularly their right to examine candidates for teachers' certificates, and emphasised new issues like the enhancement of teaching reading and school organisation in general. Nonetheless, urban schoolteachers long remained attached to their group identity as experts of writing.[16]

In the second half of the eighteenth century, Spanish experts of the art of writing and calligraphy discussed the forms of script to be generally taught in the country. The widely admired calligrapher and educational author Francisco Javier de Santiago Palomares (1728–1796) went well beyond the only practical aspects of writing in his books on this art. He intended to continue and to update a venerable tradition of cursive script originating in a golden age of writing in the sixteenth century. He deemed the art of calligraphy as one of "total decadence"[17] and pictured a history of writing as being one of the degradation of a purportedly pure Spanish character.[18] He was not alone in this position. His disciple, Estevan Ximénez, published instructions for the teaching of writing where he also saw script as conveying more than past words. He seconded his teacher and stated that, if Spaniards have "our national character",[19] it would be inappropriate to teach any other character in schools. The ambiguous meaning of "national character", alluding both to the dominant type of script and to group traits shared by all Spaniards, helped him to make an argument about suitable scripts to be taught.

At that time, Spanish schoolteachers dealt with forms of script that were increasingly named in national terms. For a long time, different scripts had received the name of the country were they were practised. But now, in the time of the emergence of nationalism, the classification of scripts as being for instance "Spanish" or "French" opened a field of associations in which culturalist views of the differences between nations were included. As the Abbott Servidori put it "letters distinguish between nations": "In this manner, we call one type of script English, another French, another Italian, and another Spanish, because they have been formed by accidents and disposals regularly used in each Nation."[20] The most celebrated calligraphic works alluded to[21] or even included particular chapters about these types of scripts.[22] This opened the possibility of an

[14]Very informative examples in Joseph Casanova, *Primer parte del arte de escrivir, del Maestro Joseph Casanova, exminador de los maestros de dicho arte. Tratado primero del origen y excelencias del arte de escrivir* (Madrid: Diego de la Carreara, 1650); Diego Bueno, *Arte nuevo de enseñar a leer, escrivir, y contar principes y señores* (Zaragoza: Domingo Cascon, Impresor del Hospital Real, 1690).

[15]Marcelo Caruso, "Technologiewandel auf dem Weg zur 'grammar of schooling.' Reform des Volksschulunterrichts in Spanien (1767–1804)," *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik* 56, no. 5 (2010): 648–65.

[16]José Díaz Manzanares, *Nulidades de la enseñanza mutua por Lancaster comparada con los sistemas españoles* (Madrid: Imprenta de D. Fermín Villalpando, 1821); *Compendio del arte de escribir por reglas y principios para el uso de las escuelas de primeras letras* (Granada: Imprenta de D. Francisco Benavides, 1823); *Manual práctico de profesores de instrucción primaria, ó sea completa guia para la organizacion y régimen interior de nuestras escuelas de primeras letras, por sistemas y métodos puramente nacionales* (Madrid: Imprenta y casa de la Unión Comercial, 1844).

[17]Francisco Javier Santiago Palomares, *Arte nueva de escribir* (Madrid: En la Imprenta de Don Antonio de Sancha, 1776), 13.

[18]See ibid., 1–12.

[19]Estevan Ximenez, *Arte de escribir* (Madrid: En la Imprenta de Benito Cano, 1789), 5.

[20]Domingo Maria de Servidori, *Reflexiones sobre la verdadera arte de escribir* (Madrid: En la Imprenta Real, 1789), 236.

[21]Joseph Anduaga y Garimberti, *Arte de escribir por reglas y sin muestras establecido de orden superior en los Reales Sitios de San Ildefonso y Valsain despues de haberse experimentado en ambos la utilidad de su enseñanza, y sus ventajas del metodo usado hasta ahora en las escuelas de primeras letras* (Madrid: En la Imprenta Real, 1781); Ximenez, *Arte de escribir*.

identifying association with one nation or, on the contrary, a distancing dissociation from another nation while dealing with these different types of script.

Still, at the end of the eighteenth century, the question of English script had a marginal meaning for teachers. The star calligraph at the turn of the century, Torcuato Torío de la Riva (1759–1820), whose works advanced as the standard for the art of writing, succinctly considered that the character of each nation had worked out a particular form of script over time. When he presented English characters, he did it for "the curious" among his readers.[23] English script still represented a curiosity and not a pressing matter. Torío considered English characters as having "an excessive width in their body" rendering this form of writing "clumsy and heavy" (see Figures 1 and 2). Spaniards looked with "horror" at these characters, yet the English would feel the same when looking at Spanish characters: "Each nation, then, has her mode of thinking in this respect."[24] But the times were rapidly changing in the early nineteenth century and new trends and entanglements shook the certainties of old calligraphic traditions. "I learnt my first letters in the best school of Cádiz," remembered the educationist and philologist Eduardo Benot (1822–1907) – "where they taught me only (but very well) to read, to write and to count. Do you know why this was the best school of the city? Because they taught English script, and, in addition, fractions and decimals."[25] The old *bastarda* or *bastardilla* cursive, whose name originally designated its mixed character and was

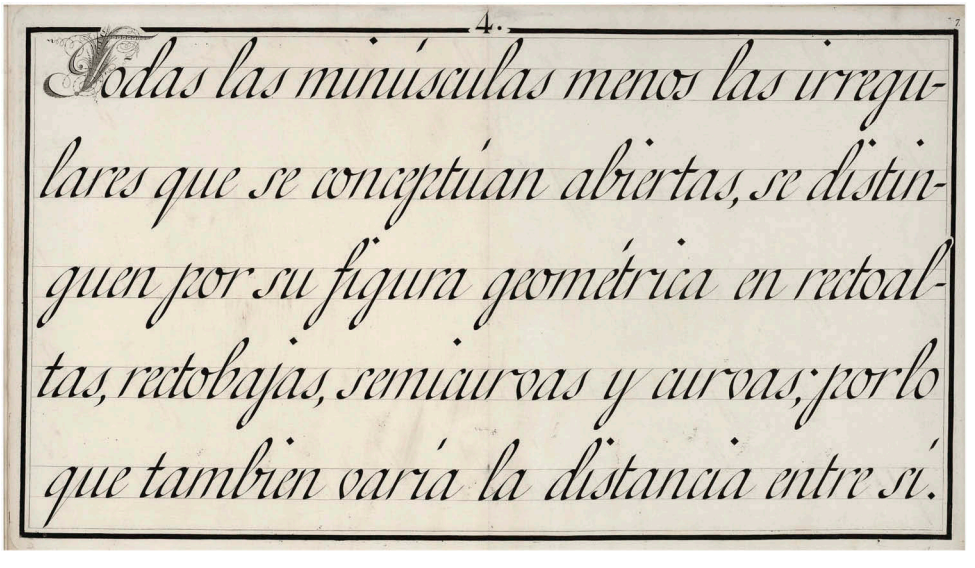

Figure 1. Sample of *bastardilla*. Source: Iturzaeta, José Francisco de (1827). *Colección de grandes muestras de letra bastarda Española*. Manuscript. Biblioteca Nacional de España.

[22]Torquato Torío de la Riva y Herrero, *Arte de escribir por reglas y con muestras* (Madrid: Imprenta de la viuda de Don Joaquin Ibarra, 1798), 166–246.
[23]Ibid., 205.
[24]Torquato Torío de la Riva, *Ortologia y diálogos de caligrafía, aritmética, gramática y ortografía castellana* (Madrid: En la Imprenta de la viuda de Ibarra, 1801), 197.
[25]José María León y Domínguez, *Recuerdos gaditanos* (Cádiz: Tipografía de Cabello y Lozón, 1897), 13.

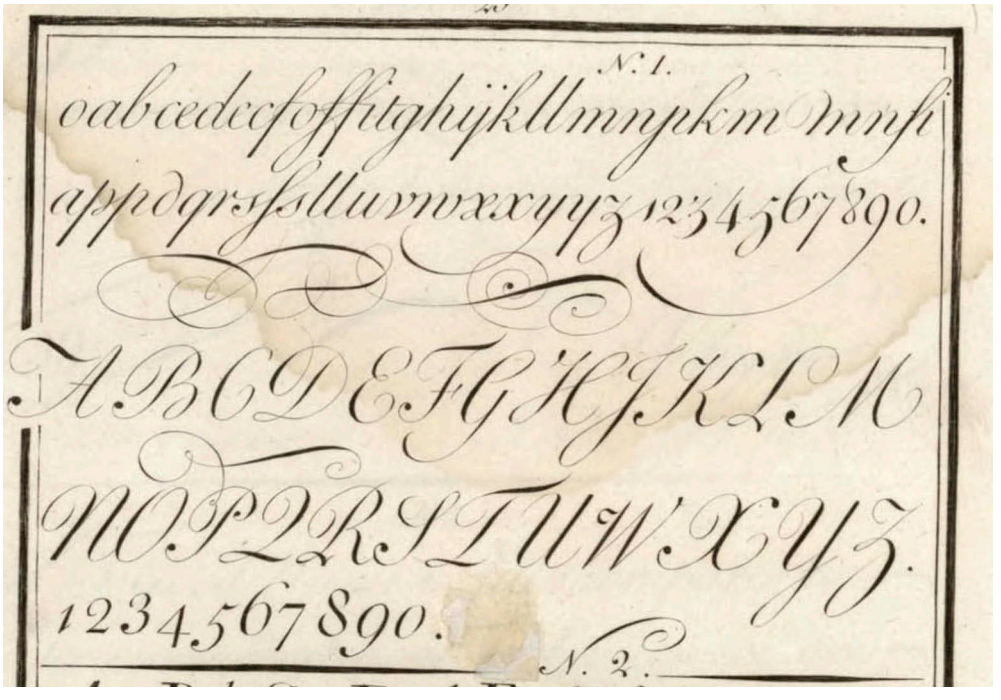

Figure 2. Sample of *inglesa*. Source: Torío de la Riva, Torcuato, Arte de escribir por reglas y con muestras, según la doctrina de los mejores autores antiguos y modernos, extranjeros y nacionales: acompañado de unos principios de Aritmética, Gramática y Ortografía castellana, Urbanidad y varios sistemas para la formación y enseñanza de los principales caracteres que se usan en Europa. Madrid: Imprenta de la viuda de don Joachin Ibarra, 1798. Image 25.

increasingly rebranded as simply "Spanish",[26] had to compete now with English script. Members of elites in commercial cities, like the Benot family in the port of Cádiz, preferred it. In Benot's recollections, including English script in the elementary curriculum seemed to have become an indication for good and modern schooling. Needless to say, the dominant culture of teaching among urban schoolteachers celebrated the bastarda or Spanish script. This preference was crucial in view of the importance of writing and calligraphy for their status. Their collective attitude would face the challenge of English script over the course of the decades to come.

2. Controversies about English script and education in Spain

The nationalised discussion about letters and scripts reached new meaning when English script spread in Spain – and in Spanish America – in the 1820s. Following the ascension of Britain and commercial capitalism as a global power, merchants, accountants, and clerks in the private sector welcomed and practised English script on both sides of the Atlantic.[27] Furthermore, In 1822, new metal pen as an industrial product began to replace old quills in England. This development certainly boosted the spread of English script

[26] Ángel Manuel Gutiérrez Cabero, "La enseñanza de la caligrafía en España a través de los Artes de Escribir de los siglos XVI al XX: la construcción de un estilo de escritura" (PhD diss., Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2014), 88–93.

because it made easier to perform their characteristic strokes.[28] In Spain, particularly after 1820, some private teachers wrote small treatises for the teaching of English script as well as model samples of the letters.[29] The 1820s must have been the decade where the new calligraphy made inroads into the culture of writing in the country. Twenty years later, Joaquín Avendaño (1812–1886), one of the leading figures of primary education in the kingdom of Spain declared in his manual of teaching that "English script is in almost general use in the registers and books used in trading".[30]

Yet Spanish nationalism rapidly developed in these years as well. A first outburst of liberal nationalism spread during and after Napoleon's occupation of the country, activating new meanings for things being Spanish, like liberties and independence.[31] A specific breed of a liberal *españolismo* also affected educational discussions, like in the case of the discussion about the introduction of monitorial schools of mutual teaching following English and French models.[32] When the Spanish parliament debated the acceptance of a general law of education in 1822, the decision about the type of script to be used in schools was clear:

> The script to adopted as norm is that known as the bastard Spanish one, the most beautiful, the most proportionate in its strokes and the most geometric among those known in Europe; although English letters have an air of gracefulness, they lack all proportions that should be between the different types of strokes, and this is an essential defect that renders the cursive English script confusing and unintelligible.[33]

Against this background, it is not unexpected that the first open general critique against the advance of English letters occurred at the end of the 1820s. This was the time of absolutist restoration, during which most things foreign were suspicious in the view of the State and the Catholic Church. The leading calligraphist of that time, José Francisco de Iturzaeta (1788–1853), initiated a polemic with nationalist overtones in his celebrated manual for the art of teaching. Although all national scripts originate from Italian script, he argued,

> the particular taste of the nations, the varying necessity of promoting a cursive common script, the differences in cutting the feather and other causes result in the diversity of scripts we witness; I would not specifically write about all of them when presenting Spanish script, if the acceptance that English script still has among us did not compel me to treat these characters with some comparative reflections.[34]

[27]Richard Dury, "Handwriting and the Linguistic Study of Letters," in *Studies in Late Modern English Correspondence: Methodology and Data*, ed. Marina Dossena and Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade (Bern: Peter Lang, 2008), 113–36; Karine Delobbe, *La belle écriture. Histoire d'un Art* (Paris: Éditions PEMF, 2002).
[28]Cotarelo y Mori, *Diccionario*, 1: 68.
[29]Gutiérrez Cabero, "La enseñanza de la caligrafía," 141–5.
[30]Joaquín Avendaño, *Manual completo de instrucción primaria elemental y superior* (Madrid: Imprenta de José González y compañía, 1846), 93; Joaquín Avendaño, *Manual completo de instrucción primaria elemental y superior* (Madrid: Imprenta de José González y compañía, 1846), 93.
[31]José Alvarez Junco, *Mater Dolorosa. La idea de España en el siglo XIX* (Madrid: Taurus, 2001); Mario Onaindía, *La construcción de la nación española. Republicanismo y nacionalismo en la ilustración* (Barcelona: Ediciones B, 2002).
[32]Marcelo Caruso, "Cheap, Suitable, Promising: Monitorial Schoooling and the Challenge of Mass Education in Early Liberal Spain (1808–1823)," *Bordon* 65, no. 4 (2013): 33–46.
[33]*Esposicion sobre el estado de la enseñanza pública hecha á las Cortes por la Direccion General de Estudios* (Madrid: Imprenta de Alban y Cía., 1822), 69.
[34]Francisco José Iturzaeta, *Arte de escribir la letra bastarda española* (Madrid: Imprenta de D. Pedro Sanz, 1827), 3.

No matter how nice this script may be, "it would not cost me much work to prove that this script is more difficult to learn …".[35] And he continued:

> The teaching of the English script, based merely on imitation, demands of those who learn it a very fine eye to give the traces the needed curves, and this requires a lot of time from the pupils, who have only one or two lines of reference and cannot get accustomed to writing it with constant similarity.[36]

Spanish letters, on the contrary, were essentially easy to write, the result of uniform movements that nonetheless produced thick, middle, and thin traces. Iturzaeta, in a somewhat reflexive moment, continued:

> Maybe this is an illusion coming from my patriotic love; but if I compare the foreign characters with our bastarda, I see in the last an energy, a strength and naturality distinct of our national character that, like our regular and majestic language, has a similarity with all our customs.[37]

Not only because of the speed of Spanish writing, but also considering "clarity, uniformity and beauty," he added, "everyone dedicated to the attentive examination of the different characters in Europe would give deserved preference to the Spanish ones".[38] English script was simply "intrusive".[39]

English characters probably encountered a friendlier reception in those small private schools catering to specific urban groups. If we take the main newspapers for announcements in Madrid in 1827, the year of Iturzaeta's reckoning, we find plenty of evidence of this. This was the case for the teacher Ruiz in Madrid, who announced in a newspaper that he also taught English characters alongside the English and French languages.[40] Another teacher announcing the teaching of English script the same year taught arithmetic and Spanish grammar as well, showing that he was not only an ordinary elementary teacher, limiting his lessons to reading and religion.[41] Again, English script was also taught in an "academy" called Minerva that admitted children between 8 and 13. This academy offered courses in different European languages, geography, and drawing, pointing at a more pre-professional learning.[42]

In the years to come, defenders of Spanish script had to witness the continued spread of the English competitor. This was particularly noticeable in commercial cities like Barcelona and Cádiz. But other influential groups also practised the new script. After having lived in exile in England between 1814 and 1820, thousands of elite Spaniards had to flee the country again during the long second political restoration between 1823 and 1833. Among them was Pablo Montesino (1781–1849), the leading figure of school policy after 1837 and first director of the central normal school of the country established in 1829. Montesino led the efforts to create a new teaching staff to counter

[35]Ibid.
[36]Ibid., 3–4. The idea that only imitation was needed in learning English letters was quite widespread. See, among others, Avendaño, *Manual completo*, 102.
[37]Iturzaeta, *Arte de escribir*, 6.
[38]Ibid., 8.
[39]Ibid.
[40]*Diario de avisos de Madrid*, February 17, 1827, 190.
[41]*Diario de avisos de Madrid*, March 2, 1827, 243.
[42]"Minerva, academia de instruccion pública," *Diario de avisos de Madrid*, April 13, 1827, 286.

those teachers still full of calligraphic pride.[43] In the time when Montesino and his allies dominated school policy, until the late 1840s, some evidence points at a somewhat broader acceptance of English script. Above all, the Ministry of Public Instruction lobbied the Queen to issue an order recommending Ramon Stirling's new manual of English calligraphy, published in Barcelona in 1843.[44] This was somewhat in contradiction to the recommendation from 1835 favouring Iturzaeta's system of teaching to write. In the 1840s, in some model schools such as the school of practice for the normal school in Huesca, under the influence of the group of modernisers led by Montesino, the upper classes received instruction in English calligraphy.[45]

These developments were ominous enough for the more traditional calligraphists. Antonio Alverá Delgras (d. 1862), who was the most conspicuous representative of those advocating traditions in matters of writing in the middle of the century, attributed the growing use of the English script to many developments:

> The many disgraced Spaniards who taught it to their children during emigration brought it after that to their native soil; the adoption of it for commerce in many of the coastal cities in Spain; the absurd humbug, propagated by some and believed by many, about the brevity of its teaching; and those ignorant lection-givers that arrive each day from France and England and who teach without knowing and offer what they cannot deliver; all those and many more have contributed to acclimatizing English script in Spain.[46]

Although nobody advocated a sweeping replacement of the bastardilla script with English script, the feeling of losing ground among schoolteachers was pronounced.

A change of fortunes favoured the embattled teachers at the end of the 1840s. Not only did the rather liberal Montesino die in 1849, but Spanish politics also took a conservative turn in the aftermath of the European revolutions in 1848. Normal schools – under suspicion of being liberal strongholds since their establishment – received new, restrictive regulations that included limiting their number in the provinces.[47] Traditionalist schoolteachers could advance as allies of the new policy priorities. Among them, Iturzaeta himself became Montesino's successor as director of the central normal school in Madrid. It was certainly a short spring for the schoolteachers and their organisations, which would be banned in 1853.[48]

During these years, a crucial change in the politics of cursive writing took place. Antonio Gil de Zárate, General Director of Public Instruction between 1846 and 1850 and a leading dramaturge of his time, remembered among the measures taken in those years:

[43] Marcelo Caruso, "Tecnologías escolares e identidades profesionales. Maestros 'antiguos' y maestros normalistas ante el modelo de la escuela mutua en Madrid (1837–1853)," *Historia de la Educación. Anuario* 8 (2007): 193–216; María del Mar del Pozo Andrés and Alberto del Pozo Pardo, "La creación de la escuela normal central y la reglamentación administrativa de un modelo institucional para la formación del magisterio español (segunda etapa: 1839–1845)," *Revista española de pedagogía* 47, no. 183 (1989): 279–311.

[44] "Bellezas de la caligrafía por R. Stirling. Obra que se publica en Barcelona," *Boletín Oficial de Instrucción Pública* 5, no. 3 (15 February 1845): 94–6.

[45] "Escuela practica normal de Huesca," *Boletín Oficial de Instrucción Pública* 7, no. 10, (31 August 1844): 539–42, 540.

[46] Antonio Alverá Delgrás, *Nuevo arte de aprender y enseñar a escribir la letra española, para uso de todas las escuelas del reino* (Madrid: n.p., 1847), 3.

[47] *Real decreto de 20 de marzo de 1849 sobre escuelas normales e inspectores de instrucción primaria* (Madrid: Imprenta de la Publicidad, 1849).

[48] Marcelo Caruso, "Pädagogik als Enteignung. Die Gründungskonflikte der Pädagogik in Spanien (1839–1852)," in *Positionierungen. Zum Verhältnis von Wissenschaft, Pädagogik und Politik*, ed. Carla Aubry et al. (Weinheim: Beltz, 2012), 202–18.

> The elegance of English characters caused their prevalence in schools; Spanish script, being the most preferable among all forms of writing due to its beauty and clarity, was waning. It was therefore necessary to order that in public schools only bastardilla script should be taught. Professor Iturzaeta, being its most zealous proponent, was appointed as director of the Central Normal School of the Kingdom after Mr Pablo Montesino's death. But fashion poses considerable obstacles to the exclusivity of Spanish script; many parents, particularly in private schools, prescribe the teaching of English characters to the teachers of their sons, but as it is not permitted in public schools, this abuse will gradually disappear.[49]

I was not able to find the order alluded to in this passage. It is probable that the very appointment of Iturzaeta as the director of the central normal school of the country would be sufficient to legitimate the Spanish bastardilla as the only script to be taught in schools.

An españolista discourse about the superiority and suitability of the bastardilla, in circulation since the early 1840s, accompanied the new official preference. This discourse largely exceeded narrow technical issues of calligraphy. When the schoolteacher Alverá Degrás, appointed together with Iturzaeta in the central normal school, published his discourse about calligraphy, he described bluntly how his endeavour was aimed at the question of reassessing collective identities through education. He wanted to "contribute with my limited calligraphic knowledge to the laudable desire of forming a true NATIONAL SCRIPT, causing the barbarous irruption of fashion or mixed-English script to yield".[50] He was horrified that among his contemporaries he mostly found the "English script, intruding script, without strength and short-lived and in addition, *foreign*."[51] The menace of the foreign constituted a consistent pattern of critique. Another expert on writing complained:

> Fashion, whose influence on the modern spirit is irresistible, has completely invaded writing and its teaching as well. This occurred in spite of the resistance exerted by the aficionados of the art of calligraphy in order to maintain the taste for Spanish script, which without doubt deserves the preference for all its advantageous features for fulfilling the aims of writing.[52]

Although he admitted that "English script is more straightforward (*franca*) and svelte (*esbelta*) than all others" and that its writing gave the hand more freedom in its movements, he complained of its exclusive teaching in some prestigious schools.[53] Certainly, dissenting voices existed. In an extensive manual of writing, one author, "contrary to general opinion on this particular point", characterised English script as being "the most modern in Europe, combining the best aspects of all other types of script".[54] And he complained: "Perhaps due to an excess of patriotism or, rather, to a misunderstood patriotic love, some authors incurred certain errors that have become generalized when they judged the beautiful English script …"[55] Detractors predicated that this script was not legible, not speedy and confusing: "All this … know the teachers

[49]Antonio Gil de Zárate, *De la instrucción pública en España*, vol. 1 (Madrid: Imprenta del Colegio de Sordo-mudos, 1855), 292–3.
[50]Alverá Delgrás, *Nuevo arte de aprender y enseñar*, 1 (capitalisation as in the original).
[51]Ibid., 2.
[52]Lázaro Ralero y Prieto, *Tratado de revision de letras, firmas y documentos sospechosos y falsos* (Madrid: Imprenta de D. Victoriano Hernando, 1860), 48.
[53]Ibid., 49.
[54]Antonio Castilla Benavides, *Curso completo de caligrafia general, ó nuevo sistema de enseñanza del arte de escribir* (Madrid: Oficinas tipo-lito-caligráficas del Curso completo de caligrafía general, 1866), 175.
[55]Ibid., 39–40.

and the parents, and even the children and they believe it with all the faith proper of an inner conviction …"[56]

Spanish script and its supporters had the upper hand after 1850. The preference for bastardilla was official and this form of script was in any case the traditional and predominant one. Beyond specific contexts like commerce and decorative calligraphy, the threat of English script was not as urgent and widespread as critics portrayed it. The controversies presented display the anxieties of particular groups trapped in the dynamics of modernisation. Schoolteachers, often represented by the bastardilla calligraphists, were playing defence as they were compared with the new group of professionals being educated in the new normal schools. It was not only tangible interest that promoted their positioning. Characterisations were well beyond the practical and the material. Moreover, they used a nationalistic vocabulary evoking feelings of superiority and precedence. In this sense, the solely sectorial prevalence of English script and the rejection of its attached meanings as cosmopolitan and commercial mirrors quite well the ideological underpinnings of Spanish education and society at the middle of the century.

3. Republican identity and English lettering in Hispanic America

On the other side of the Hispanic Atlantic, the challenge posed by English script encountered a quite different political and cultural situation. More than 20 different republics emerged out of the four colonial viceroyalties in a relatively short time. As a reaction to the breakthrough of modern politics, these young Latin American republics eagerly looked for models of progress.[57] The revision of the colonial past, including the educational past, was ignited early on. The repeated complaint about the long-term effects of a "defective colonial education" suggested that a renewed educational culture should accompany the republican experiment of the new polities.[58] Latin Americans pictured colonial education as a limited, quite monastic, and scholastic endeavour that had to be discarded. Expectations ran high: contemporaries credited a renewed education with guaranteeing the fragile new republican order, securing the integrity of the unstable borders by cultivating allegiances, and preventing civil strife.[59] In sum, old certainties eroded and the avid reception of new ideas and knowledge accelerated.[60]

[56]Ibid., 40–1.

[57]François-Xavier Guerra, *Modernidad e independencias. Ensayos sobre las revoluciones hispánicas*, 3rd ed. (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2000); José Antonio Aguilar Rivera and Rafael Rojas, eds., *El republicanismo en Hispanoamérica. Ensayos de historia intelectual y política* (Mexico: FCE, 2002).

[58]Marcelo Caruso, "To forget everything and to learn again. Postcolonial order, colonial education and legitimacy in nineteenth century Latin America," in *Decolonization(s) and Education. New Men for New Polities*, ed. Marcelo Caruso and Daniel Maul (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2019).

[59]Sol Serrano, "La ciudadanía examinada: El control estatal de la educación en Chile (1810–1870)," in *Inventando la nación. Iberoamérica siglo XIX*, ed. Antonio Annino and François-Xavier Guerra (Mexico: FCE, 2003); Meri L. Clark, "Conflictos entre el Estado y las elites locales sobre la educación colombiana durante las décadas de 1820 y 1830," *Historia crítica*, no. 34 (2007): 550–64; John Charles Chasteen, *Americanos. Latin America's Struggle for Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 32–61.

[60]Eugenia Roldán Vera, *The British Book Trade and Spanish American Independence. Education and Knowledge Transmission in Transcontinental Perspective* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003); Marcelo Caruso, "Independencias latinoamericanas y escuelas mutuas. Un análisis desde la perspectiva de la historia global (ca. 1815–1850)," in *Educación y emancipación*, ed. Claudia Alves (Río de Janeiro: UERJ, 2010), 19–42; Eugenia Roldán Vera, "Internacionalización pedagógica y comunicación en perspectiva histórica: La introducción del método de enseñanza mutua en Hispanoamérica independiente," in *Internacionalización. Políticas educativas y reflexión pedagógica en un medio global*, ed. Marcelo Caruso and Heinz-Elmar Tenorth (Buenos Aires: Granica, 2011), 297–344.

The changes brought about by independence reached the realm of language as well. Although the consciousness of a common cultural heritage was still dominant, influential post-independence intellectuals emphasised the particular features of Hispanic American Spanish language. The differences between peninsular Spanish and American Spanish were by no means generalisable, because variations across South and Central America were also evident. Nonetheless specificities of both American language[61] and grammar[62] were discussed. Simón Rodríguez (1769–1854), an influential writer and educator proposed not less than a "revolution in the alphabet" by changing basic orthographic rules adapted to pronunciation.[63] More consequential was the work of another leading intellectual of that time. The Venezuelan Andrés Bello (1781–1865), a philologist and a central figure in the field of higher education in Chile, advocated both the purity of language and the specificities of American Spanish.[64] One centrepiece of his efforts combining purity and difference was his co-authored proposal of reforming orthography following pronunciation. This meant a huge departure from an orthography regulated by etymology. In this sense, Bello preferred actual use to origins and lineage.[65] First published in 1823, Bello persuaded the Chilean government in 1844 to adopt this new system as an official orthography. This new, American orthographic norm expanded to Argentina, Colombia, and Central America, although it did not reach official status in those countries. Only in 1927 was this visible other orthography banned.

This kind of self-assertion of Americanism through visible language differentiation included in some countries the question of the form of the letters used in writing, and particularly the question of English script. As in the case of Spain, the introduction of English script closely followed the expansion of transcontinental commerce and English presence. After 1820, British settlers, many of whom worked in international commerce, lived in some Latin American cities.[66] British influence expanded considerably over the course of the nineteenth century and, particularly for South America, historiography has discussed the thesis of an "informal empire" held by the British in the Southern Cone.[67] Following this influential group and presence, English script became prestigious in commercial circles.

[61]Horacio González, ed. *Beligerancia de los idiomas. Un siglo y medio de discusión sobre la lengua latinoamericana* (Buenos Aires: Colihue, 2008). Not all aspects of language were in the discussion: Manuel Alvar has shown how late the question of defining a "national language" was included in American constitutions: see Manuel Alvar, "Lengua nacional y sociolingüística: Las constituciones de América," *Bulletin Hispanique* 84, no. 3-4 (1982): 347–414.

[62]Elvira Narvaja de Arnoux, "Grammar and the State in the Southern Cone in the Nineteenth Century," in *A Political History of Spanish: The Making of a Language*, ed. José del Valle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 152–66; Beatriz González Stephan, "Las disciplinas escriturarias de la patria: constituciones, gramáticas y manuales," *Estudios: Revista de investigaciones literarias* 3, no. 5 (1995): 19–46.

[63]Quoted in Ronald Briggs, *Tropes of Enlightenment in the Age of Bolivar: Simón Rodríguez and the American Essay at Revolution* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2010), 155.

[64]José J. Gómez Asencio, "De gramática para americanos a gramática de todos. El caso de Bello (1847)," *RAHL: Revista argentina de historiografía lingüística* 1 (2009): 1–18.

[65]Juan García del Río and Andrés Bello, "Indicaciones sobre la coveniencia de simplificar i uniformar la ortografía en América," *El Repertorio Americano* 1 (1826): 27–41.

[66]For Chile: Eduardo Cavieres Figueroa, *Comercio chileno y comerciantes ingleses, 1820–1880: un ciclo de historia económica* (Valparaíso: Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, 1988).

[67]Matthew Brown, ed. *Informal Empire in Latin America: Culture, Commerce, and Capital* (Malden, Oxford: Willey-Blackwell, 2008); Paul Garner, "El 'imperio informal' británico en América Latina: ¿Realidad o ficción?"*Historia Mexicana* 65, no. 2 (2015): 541–59.

Due to the lack of a specific scholarship, it is very difficult to assess whether English script entered the field of education. In addition, developments largely diverged across the new polities. First, I will present those cases where rejection of the new script prevailed. Then I will briefly present information about the case of Mexico, where contradictory evidence exists. I will finally sketch the developments in the Southern Cone, where the English script apparently spread in schools. A cautionary general note is necessary. It is clear that a complete replacement of the style of cursive handwriting used in schools and education was not possible in the short term. These kinds of changes were by no means spontaneous; rather they needed consistent intervention and support by groups interested in this change. In view of the fragile and discontinuous status of elementary school policies at the time, the limited character of the changes summarised below, particularly in public schools, must be assumed.

In at least four cases, a rollback in the adoption of the English script in schools and administration is documented. Considering the significant influence of England in Colombian politics, culture, and even in the field of education, the explicit official preference for Spanish script is somewhat unexpected. In 1831 the education minister ordered that children be taught to write "by the samples of Spanish script produced by Morante, Palomares, Torio de la Riva or others of this kind". This was intended to "avoid the harm caused by the confusion introduced into Penmanship by badly shaped letters that were commonly called English Script".[68] The tone of this order recalls the question of unity and uniformity and this resonates in two directions. First unity was a dramatic issue in a country that just one year before had been broken up into three parts: Venezuela, New Granada (Colombia), and Ecuador. Second, the uniformity of writing seems to be a bureaucratic requirement and Bogotá was a city where commerce was not as dominant as lawyers and administrators were. Meri Clark collected the reactions of province governors to this order. These clearly show that the question of the type of script was an issue for them and they framed this question using "nationalist terms".[69] One anonymous author did not exactly know two years later, "whether this order has been enforced, we would like the authorities to insist on it" because the "fashion of bad writing" was still spreading. English script may be very beautiful, but

> to confuse writing … is not only harmful, we do not hesitate to call it ridiculous. It is not a good thing to take our urge for imitation to such an extreme and copy from the English people this and other extravagant habits.[70]

Although English script may have symbolised modern and post-colonial educational practices for some, its adoption may have excited widespread angst around too sweeping cultural transformations and alienation as well.

In Bolivia English script also experienced a setback in 1832. After reviewing school inspection reports, the Bolivian government spoke about

> confusion instead of clarity, difference instead of uniformity, and a heavy-hand instead of celerity. Writing is the image of the words that, in turn, represent the thoughts; the clearer the former, the better concepts will be presented to the intelligence. The purest of the

[68]Félix Restrepo, "Circular a las comisiones e institutores de escuelas," *Constitucional de Cundinamarca* 1, no. 10 (27 November 1831): 37.
[69]Clark, "Teaching Writing," 456.
[70]"Resabios caligraficos," *Constitucional del Cauca*, March 2, 1833, 2–3.

> English scripts will not be for us so clear as the Spanish ones. Having introduced in the schools the arbitrariness of English, MC writing samples, children have bad writing and they confuse everything. The same inconvenience that we see has been felt in Colombia and other American states …

For this reason, the government ordered "that in all schools teachers should teach writing based on the writing samples of Morante, Palomares or Torio, while continuing the use of the system of mutual teaching".[71] This explicit mention of continuing with the system of mutual teaching while altering the type of handwriting being taught is illuminating. It shows the long shadow of writing as being the most important part of the schoolmaster's knowledge in the older Spanish tradition. The author of the order feared that the ordered change in the type of writing used in schools may have motivated some to abandon the system of mutual teaching altogether, which was by no means what was intended. In a new turn in the 1850s, English script resurfaced as a content of teaching: in 1855, the Bolivian government ordered a number of tables with English script from Europe and distributed them in the departments of the republic for their use in schools.[72]

In 1840, the Peruvian Ministry of Public Instruction also restored the teaching of Spanish script in schools and positively referred to the "old method".[73] The semi-official newspaper *El Peruano* celebrated the return of the "beautiful script crafted by Palomares and Torcuato" and expected a sweeping betterment of the quality of writing: "English script has been adopted only by fashion; and today writing is so defective that a booklet or a letter is lastly nothing else than the overcrowding of barbarous characters that do not belong to any nation …"[74] A reversal in Mexico's regimental schools is documented as well: English script had been adopted "due to the ease of its learning and ligatures; yet experience has demonstrated that its perfect command demands too many exercises, for this reason, Iturzaeta's Spanish system has been adopted".[75]

These episodes of rejection of English script took place in those regions where colonial written culture and administration had been more consistent and showed a pervading presence over centuries. A sense of the unquestioned legitimacy of the inherited culture seems to have accompanied these measures. Juan Ignacio Gorriti (1766–1842), a liberal churchman and a representative of his province in many congresses and constitutional assemblies in Argentina, put this view in terms of a perfect fit between culture, language, and letters. He considered British Lancasterian schools as being real progress for the young republics.

> Nonetheless, no matter how excellent the Lancasterian method is, it is not free of inconvenient aspects for those who speak and write Castilian. Lancasterian teachers pay particular attention to the learning of a foreign script by their pupils. They do this to the point where the pupils forget the Spanish form that they fairly mastered … Among the letters of Italian, French, English and Spanish forms the last deserves our preference for its clarity and gracefulness … It is exactly suited to the genius of our Spanish language.[76]

[71] Circular no. 44, 30 May 1832, published in: *El Iris de la Paz*, August 5, 1832, 3.
[72] Circular from 14 April 1855, published in: *El Anuario de 1855 de la administracion de C.J.M.I. Belzu* (Paz de Ayacucho: Imprenta de Eujenio Alarcon, 1855), 15–16.
[73] "Casa del Supremo Gobierno en Lima," *El Peruano*, April 1, 1840, 103.
[74] "Forma de letra Española," *El Peruano*, April 1, 1840, 106.
[75] "Memoria del Secretario de Estado de del Despacho de Guerra y de Marina," *Diario del Gobierno de la Republica Mexicana*, no. 3257, May 23, 1844, 1.
[76] Juan Ignacio Gorriti, *Reflecciones sobre las causas morales de las convulsiones interiores en los nuevos estados americanos y examen de los medios eficaces para reprimirlas* (Valparaíso: Imprenta del Mercurio, 1836), 86–7.

It is this nativist argument that combined with historical accounts to stress the cultural commonalities between Spain and the new republics. One Peruvian editorialist, while complaining about the "spirit of imitation" and celebrating the restoration of Spanish script, looked back to luckier times of calligraphic perfection: "When Spanish script was taught in elementary schools, it produced calligraphers of such excellence that their hands, without exaggeration, were ambulant print shops, today largely neglected . . ."[77] Not only nostalgia motivated these kind of laments. The association between the emergence of a specific breed of Latin American conservatism and the re-evaluation of the Spanish heritage actually spread in the middle of the nineteenth century.

These defensive developments, accompanied by complaints about imitation, confusion, disunion, and asserting the congeniality of Spanish script and the local mindset were by no means general. In Cuba, still a Spanish colony, the schools of the local Patriotic Society in Havana, financially supported by local merchants, used it.[78] Other school inspection reports from public schools revealed that English script was being taught in the city, even in some female schools.[79] But also in another stronghold of the Spanish heritage, in Mexico, records on the adoption of the English script in schools are numerous. Moreover, there is no record of an official rollback in this respect. Regarding the first aspect, newspapers show numerous announcements for private teachers offering the new script. For instance, in the capital city, a closer view of the newspapers around 1830 unearths several offers published by foreign teachers,[80] including individual women,[81] promising to teach this cursive style "in a very short time".[82] Nonetheless, English script was still an additional offer to the regular curriculum since "those who would like to learn English script too should pay double".[83] For some teachers, this additional type of script defined their profile, as they presented themselves as "professors of English script".[84] In a retrospective view of the local schools, Luis Malanco, president of the municipal commission for public instruction in Mexico City in the 1870s, affirmed that English script had become generalised in the schools during the 1830s and 1840s.[85] One anonymous author in the middle of the century missed the time "in which Mexican people wrote after Palomares", whereas today, "we write with English characters learnt in twelve lessons".[86] Some Mexican teachers linked the use of the new script and the progress of the new time. Luis Chousal, praising his method of teaching English script mentioned that women are "naturally vivid" and "lack reflection", so they do not come along with the old methods of teaching to write:

[77]"Forma de letra Española," *El Peruano*, April 1, 1840, 106.
[78]Pedro José Morillas, "Informa de los trabajos en que se ha ocupado la Junta de la Real Casa de Beneficencia en año de 1841," *Memorias del a Sociedad Patriótica de La Habana* 13 (1841): 191–201.
[79]Mariano Dumás Chancel, *Guía del profesorado cubano para 1868* (Matanzas: Imprenta del Ferro-Carril, 1868), 199, 238.
[80]"Manuel Le-Roy," *El Fénix de la Libertad*, April 25, 1831, 4.
[81]"Casa de educacion para niñas dirigida por las Sras Desmortiers enseña letra inglesa," *El Fénix de la Libertad*, September 29, 1833, 4.
[82]Pedro Capdet, "Enseñanza de escritura, forma inglesa, perfecta por el nuevo método," *El Sol* 5, no. 552 (1 March 1831), Anno 5, no. 552, 2208.
[83]Victor Proudon, "Nuevo curso teórico-práctico de idioma francés," *El Fénix de la Libertad*, January 11, 1831, 4.
[84]"Rafael Bofdingt, profesor de la letra inglesa," *El Fénix de la Libertad*, October 24, 1833, 4.
[85]Luis Malanco, "La instruccion primaria," *El monitor republicano*, July 31, 1873, 1.
[86]"De medico, poeta y loco, todos tenemos un poco," *El universal*, June 6, 1851, 1.

> In England and France, women write as well as men do. The English script is elegant and light. It has been introduced in all good schools and commerce houses of our continent. Its teaching is so easy that it is desirable that this mode would propagate itself in the republic and even more because some of our Mexican women are dedicating themselves to these exercises that only men practiced in times of the Spanish government.[87]

Published in a newspaper close to freemason circles, this article portrays the visibility of the new script as a clear sign of broader transformations.

Finally, in the countries of the Southern Cone, where British influence was apparently more pronounced, the shift in the preferences favouring the English script was consistent. An early case where English script seemed to take the upper hand was Uruguay. The port city of Montevideo saw a relatively early spread of the new script. In the local elementary schools during the 1820s, the Spanish émigré Juan Catalá introduced English script together with the English system of mutual or Lancasterian teaching.[88] School policies were consistent in their preference for the new script. Interestingly, a recent analysis of samples of writing from different institutional contexts in the country shows that there was a bifurcation of scripts being used. Whereas the writing samples from schools show the widespread practice of English cursive script, particularly in the city of Montevideo, bureaucrats still used the old Spanish cursive.[89] This shows an orientation of the schools towards the merchant culture of this port town. Although civil wars marked the country for decades, the modernising value of English script prevailed over possible concerns about uniformity and disunion.

Events in Chile and Argentina also show a preference for English lettering that were intimately linked to questions of collective identity. In Chile, Andrés Bello's work on "American" grammar and orthography had prepared the ground for further developments. Now, the question of the form of letters became an additional aspect of the differentiation from Spanish heritage while reasserting a novel collective identity. English script in Chile was usual in the port city of Valparaíso, where a wealthy merchant English community had settled.[90] Also prestigious private schools, like that of Estefanía de Mora used both mutual teaching and English script.[91] In Santiago de Chile, the Argentinean émigré Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (1811–1888), who rapidly ascended the ladder to the highest positions in the field of school policy in the 1840s, favoured English script. A fiery liberal worried about civil unrest and "barbarism" in his home country, Sarmiento endorsed and expanded Bello's orthographic reform. Concerning the specific issue of cursive handwriting, he introduced English script in the normal school he established in 1841, the first in South America.[92] He admitted that Spanish characters still had local supporters in Santiago de Chile, but arguments favouring English script were for him compelling:

[87]Luis Chousal, "Lecciones para aprender a escribir en muy poco tiempo," *El Sol*, April 5, 1828, 7030.
[88]Viacava, "Teaching, Learning, and Evaluating," 567.
[89]Ibid., 568.
[90]William Edmunson, *A History of the British Presence in Chile. From Bloody Mary to Charles Darwin and the Decline of British Influence* (New York: Palgrave, 2009).
[91]"D. José Joaquín de Mora," *Revista de Santiago* 1 (1872): 972–88.
[92]The school of application of the central normal school in Santiago de Chile continued to teach English letters to its pupils as well as the normal course did to the future schoolteachers: *Discurso de apertura en las sesiones del Congreso i memorias ministeriales correspondientes al segundo quinquenio de la administracion Montt* (Santiago de Chile: Imprenta del Ferrocarril, 1860), 370–1.

> English script, called in this manner because it first spread in that nation, is today the script of the civilized peoples, the writing mode of commerce, taking this place in Italy, Germany, or France, although it is true that in each of those nations peculiar forms of writing still exist in spite of the general adoption of the English characters.[93]

His efforts to decouple English script from England were consistent: "English script is English in origin, but universally used."[94]

For Sarmiento, English script was a visible and distinct sign of "civilisation". Moreover, this script being the first choice in the field of commerce, teachers had to learn it in order to give their pupils the possibility of earning a living: "There are hundreds of youths in Chile that, having nothing, have reached an honourable position due to the sole fact that they possessed a good form of English script."[95] To the backers of Spanish script, he admonished: "The adoption of the pale and obsolete Spanish script would bring, as a consequence, the suppression of the possibility of progress for thousands of young people who could benefit from the acquisition of excellent English script in schools."[96] Beyond practical reasons, a conscious departure from the Spanish tradition was one major tenet:

> In Spain, the old script is still in use due to the peninsular isolation that perpetuate this use, the nullity of its commerce and, it is a shame to say it, the acts of government that have banned it (English script, MC). This comes from the inclination of those powers accustomed for a long time to arbitrariness, to interfere with everything and to order as convenient all those things rulers deem brilliant and agreeable.[97]

Moreover, this isolationist and autocratic tendency was also to be found in some Hispanic American republics. Sarmiento pointed at the autocratic government of Juan Manuel de Rosas in the Province of Buenos Aires that had ordered the restoration of Spanish script in 1835:

> In this manner, governments in Spain and Buenos Aires have prescribed the forms of the letters and even the orthography to be used; these are clear indications of the affinity and kinship of these two peoples used to the tutelage of power.[98]

Sure, Sarmiento was not opposed to a strong, centralised state as long as it promoted the "right" kind of laws; here, a "progressive" script that aligned with English industrial capitalism. But in the cases of backward Spain and secluded Buenos Aires these interventions were condemnable.

It was Sarmiento, again, who would play a major role in restoring English lettering in the education of the city and province of Buenos Aires. Returning to the city in 1855 after the fall of Rosas's regime, he was repeatedly appointed to positions in the nascent educational bureaucracy, both in the city and province of Buenos Aires.[99] On the

[93]Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, *De la educación popular* (Santiago: Domingo Belín, 1849), 435.
[94]Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, "Informe sobre el primer ejercicio de maestros (1855)," in *Obras completas*, ed. Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (Buenos Aires: Imprenta Mariano Moreno, 1899), 228.
[95]Sarmiento, *Educación popular*, 435.
[96]Ibid.
[97]Ibid.
[98]Ibid., 435–6.
[99]Marcelo Caruso and Marco Rodríguez Wehrmeister, "Significados divergentes de lo popular. Sarmiento, Sastre y sus aliados en la educación primaria de la ciudad de Buenos Aires durante el período liberal temprano (1852–1872)," *Historia y Memoria de la Educación* 7 (2018): 423–65.

question of the preferred form of script, he had plenty to achieve. When Juan Manuel de Rosas had ordered the exclusive teaching of the Spanish bastardilla script in 1835, the main considerations had been practical, stressing the confusion and lack of clarity, without any traces of complaints against imitation of the foreign. Still, this decree called the script "Spanish bastardilla", evoking cultural roots in a port city where English influence was considerable.[100]

From 1856 he was in charge of the organisation of the first model school in the city, where English script should be taught.[101] He convinced the local legislators to spend a considerable sum of money in this endeavour. In 1857 the City Council even approved additional funds to employ "an inspector for calligraphy for the correction of the English script". The council cast doubt on the need for this new inspector position. Even Sarmiento considered that it was not "indispensable, but it is a convenient position to provide for in order to generalize English script that is not taught in schools". Furthermore, only three teachers in the city knew the script well.[102] The change in the policy of school script was certainly not easy. Sarmiento himself seemed sometimes to capitulate. In a letter to the minister of foreign relations asking for help in exempting imported paper from taxation, he alleged that "the type of script called English is universally accepted by all nations", but "it would be inconvenient to replace those teachers who do not write beautifully in English script or cannot teach it due to the difficulty in replacing them with more suitable ones."[103]

In the 1860s, English letters were the "only admitted character in the public schools" in Buenos Aires, even if there was still a lack of calligraphists mastering this script.[104] Evidence shows a wide acceptance of the new script in the city. Marcos Sastre (1808–1887), a leading educational author of textbooks often opposed to Sarmiento assured in his "eclectic method" for teaching writing that even those teachers who could not write English characters could teach them with the help of his manual.[105] Also in those years the inspector Guillermo Scully organised conferences for explaining the art of English calligraphy to all male teachers of the city.[106]

Sarmiento further propagated English script in his tenure as Superintendent of Schools for the Province of Buenos Aires between 1857 and 1860. He recommended expanding the success in the teaching of English script to the countryside by introducing competitions and prizes.[107] In an circular to all teachers on the question of writing, he repeated that "the form of English cursive script has substituted overall the diverse forms used generally in each nation".[108] Moreover,

[100]"Decreto mandando adoptar la letra bastardilla española en todas las escuelas publicas y particulares," *Registro oficial del Gobierno de Buenos Aires* 15 (1835): 148–9.
[101]*Informe del comisionado especial para la creacion de una esucela modelo decretada por la Municipalidad de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires* (Buenos Aires: Imprenta Argentina, 1857), 9–10.
[102]*Actas del Concejo Municipal de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires correspondiente al año 1857* (Buenos Aires: Talleres Gráficos Optimus, 1911), 277.
[103]D.F. Sarmiento to Dalmacio Vélez Sarsfield, August 11 1856, in *Anales de la educación común* 1, no. 2 (1 December 1858): 58–9, 58.
[104]Marcos Sastre, *La educación popular en Buenos Aires* (Buenos Aires: Librería de Morta, 1865), 38.
[105]Ibid., 65.
[106]Bustamante Vismara, "Escrituras y lecturas," 379.
[107]"Al preceptor de las Escuela Pública del Partido del Monte," *Anales de la educación común* 1, no. 8 (August 1, 1859): 251–2.
[108]Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, "Método razonado de letra inglesa. Instrucciones que deben seguir los maestros y maestras de las escuelas comunes de la Provincia de Buenos Aires," in *Obras de D.F. Sarmiento* (Buenos Aires: Imprenta y Litografia Mariano Moreno, 1899), 278–87.

> in the countries of the English race, physicians already believe that this form of letters is hereditary, because they frequently see that the script of a son, in some respects, is similar to that of the father, without having had him as a model. This may explain the general imperfection with which, English script is written by us giving it a bastard form; but it is also a fact that in those schools where the teacher possesses a correct form or he is zealous in its teaching, his pupils generally tend to reproduce it properly. In Buenos Aires, the schools of the teachers Peña and Sustaita were famous for many years; there the pupils stood out for the excellent script they wrote. These facts show that perfection is always reachable.[109]

His well-known (and much-criticised) use of racial arguments are here in full display. English script had become a kind of second nature to the English. Children embodied it although a transmission of its form had not taken place.

At the turn of the 1860s, when the first comprehensive regulations for primary schools were introduced at the national level in some Hispanic American countries, developments went in two opposite directions. Summarily, in a group of countries where a combination of stronger attachment to the Spanish cultural tradition and a more conservative turn in politics prevailed, the rejection of English script for general schools had gained momentum since the 1830s, although these rejections, as in the Bolivian case, were not definitive. In other countries, dominated by port cities and with a considerable presence of English merchants and English settlers, English script was on the rise. Uruguay, Chile, and Argentina (or, at least, Buenos Aires) promoted the shift in school writing and calligraphy and main actors, above all the resolute Sarmiento, considered the new script as a visible sign of modernity detached from Spanish cultural inheritance and oriented towards "civilisation". In the middle, and keeping the exploratory character of this article in mind, the Mexican development seems to have both expanded use of English script in regular schools while limiting it in other schools like those of the military. In any case, the question of the form that letters took was imbued with cultural and political meanings. The visible dimension of writing was not treated as a technicality, but rather as a projection of the collective identities being shaped the new Latin American republics.

4. Education, the visibility of script, and collective projections in the Hispanic world

Transitions to political and cultural modernity not only promoted hopes of a better, egalitarian, and progressive future. They were marked by widespread uncertainties as well. By opening up the options, the circulation of different scripts also offered a source of uncertainty. Negotiations and positioning about the form of script used resonated with all literate groups and affected different fields like administration and justice. Faced with the growing importance of the "intruding" foreign scripts, decisions about the future scripts of the old monarchy and the young republics had to be made. This source of uncertainty showed itself particularly, but not solely, in the field of education and schooling.

In Spain, the meanings attached to different scripts resulted from a tight historical link between the perception of a consolidated national character and the work of teaching the art of writing. Although this national character had to be reasserted in the transition to a parliamentary monarchy, even anglophile liberals in the 1820s did

[109] Ibid.

not actually consider replacing the inherited script. Spanish liberals did not equate liberalism with the rejection of the complete Spanish past. In their view, Spanish political modernity would not be something completely new, but only the restoration of old liberties that absolutism had abolished. In this view, Spanish script did not necessarily stand for backwardness or oppression. Regardless of the considerable cultural and political transfer from other European countries to Spain in the context of this transition, the invention of political and cultural modernity could be attached to the existing image of a "national character", including both collective traits of the common history and the form of script.

In Latin America, the break with the past was more radical and could not rely on inherited collective representations. The general sense among republican elites that the new political order necessitated new collective attachments to until-then unknown institutions included a distancing from familiar cultural forms. The introduction of English script visibly showed both a turning away from tradition and a fresh orientation to a new and modern culture. English script seemed to prevail in the schools of those countries, where their self-definition as new polities included a conscious detachment from Spanish heritage. In this process, local situations show a complexity that cannot be described in binary terms. There was not a simple association between English script and liberalism, on the one side, and Spanish script and conservatism, on the other. Over the course of the century, England became a model of progress for Latin American conservatives as well, who saw in the stable English political order a telling contrast to the instability of the new republics. Similarly, change is not only related to the adoption of English script, with the Spanish script being a symbol of permanence and total continuity. Even those countries opting for the traditional script accepted the reformed versions of the nineteenth century such as Iturzaeta, and not the old colonial version. This orientation included crucial didactical shifts as well. Moreover, the decision to opt for Spanish script was now a conscious one, this also being a sign of the new times where things that had previously been considered almost natural had become more problematic and optional.

Complaints about confusion and lack of clarity were almost ubiquitous. In dealing with the challenge of this intruder writing style, concerns about the insufficient legibility of scripts were nonetheless stronger in the South and Central American republics. These may have echoed concerns about the problematic legibility of the societal order during the transition to the specific cultural and political modernity of the region. The quest for collective identity in the Hispanic world in this transitional time took place on many grounds, among them on the field of schooling and education. It was not only a quest for ideas and representations, but also a quest for visible, materialised signs of the new times. It was in this context that English script, strongly associated with modernity and commercial capitalism, advanced to become a collective projection screen for hope, loss, and reform.

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